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THE COMPOUND PAST TENSES, ACTIVE AND PASSIVE,  
IN MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN

AS REPRESENTED BY

HEINRICH VON VELDEKE, GOTTFRIED VON STRASS-  
BURG, AND WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH

The present study is an attempt to determine as accurately as possible how the compound past tenses (active and passive) were used by certain typical poets of the Middle High German classical period. It has been the writer's endeavor to discover the exact function of the perfect and pluperfect in this period, and to show how it differs from that which these tenses have in modern High German.

The works examined are as follows: the complete works of Heinrich von Veldeke (*Eneide*, ed. Behaghel; *Servatius* and *Lyrics* in Vol. 4, 1 of *Deutsche National-Litteratur*), the first 10,000 lines of Gottfried's *Tristan* (Vol. VII, *Deutsche Classiker des Mittelalters*), and Cantos XV and XVI of Wolfram's *Parzifal* (Vol. XI, same series).

I. PERFECT, AND PRETERIT FOR PERFECT

1. *Active Voice*

A. PERFECT: The MHG perfect had, in general, the same function as the NHG perfect. But as it was a comparatively new tense, the older preterit is sometimes found in places where modern usage calls for the compound tense. It is our purpose, as already indicated, to determine (a) whether the MHG poets show a definite feeling for the difference between these two tenses, and (b) if so, how that feeling differs from that of modern German.

The function of the NHG perfect is expressed by Blatz (NHD Grammatik, Tauberbischofsheim 1880, p. 631) as follows: "Das absolute Perfect drückt eine in der Gegenwart des Sprechenden vollendete Handlung aus, die entweder in der Gegenwart abgeschlossen ist, oder in ihren Ergebnissen als dauernder Zustand auf die Gegenwart einwirkt." "Das relative Perfect bezeichnet die Vorzeitigkeit, wenn die Haupthandlung im Präsens ist." As the main action in MHG is very seldom in the present, the relative perfect is practically non-existent and may be ignored.

There are 390 active perfects in Veldeke, 260 in the 10,000 lines of Gottfried, and 73 in the 2,800 lines of Wolfram. Blatz's definition of the absolute perfect covers nearly every one of them. A few examples are:

sus kom ich an diz pfädelin,  
daz *hât* mich unze her *getragen*. (T. 2714-5)

ich sorge des den ich *hân brâht*  
wan daz ich trostes *hân gedâht*  
in süle des grâles kraft ernern. (P. XV, 115-7)

Occasionally the perfect has future perfect meaning:

der gibe ich dir, swie vil du wilt;  
dâ mite *hân* ich dir wol *gespilt*. (T. 3733-4)

There are a few subjunctives, but as we are not concerned with the question of mode, we need not discuss them.

(a) To express an action begun in the past but continuing into the present, modern German uses the present. Ex. "Er ist schon lange da." In such cases Veldeke's usage varies. The perfect is regularly found in Servatius and the Lyrics.

sì es sô goet end ouch sô skône,  
die ich nu lange *hân gelovet*. (L. 74, 20-1)

dar *hât* ein bisdoem *gewest* meisterlös. (S. I, 414-5)

Cf. S. I, 2548. In the Eneide we sometimes find the present, sometimes the preterit, only once the perfect.

ich *weil* et mère dann ein jâr (E. 5422, cf. 3948)

nu moet ich floeken den goden  
den ich *diende* all min leven,  
end min opper *hân gegeven*. (E. 8200-2)

The perfect in 8202 seems to have been used for the sake of the rime *leven-gegeven*. That Veldeke preferred the preterit is proved by the following passage which occurs only a few lines further on:

met werken joch met worden  
*diend* ich hen nacht ende dach (E. 8208-9)

Gottfried regularly used the perfect:

man *hât* den zins nu manegen tac  
von hinnen und von Engelant  
ze Irlanden âne reht *gesant* (T. 6270-2)

See also T. 67-8, 7599. But there is one present.

nu *weiz* ich doch nu lange daz. (T. 4424)

No examples were noted in Wolfram.

B. PERFECT for PRETERIT: There are three instances of this in Veldeke.

he wart des te râde,  
 dat he sine gnâde  
 toe mir kerde,  
 ende sô erde  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 dat he mir sin rike  
 met sînre dochter *hât gegeven*,  
 of ich hen mochte overleven,  
 . . . . .  
 end bi sinen live  
 gaf he mir borge ende lant, (E. 5353-65)

Hebbet ir nu wale vernomen,  
 wie der hêre *es te Trieghte komen*,  
 . . . . .  
 end wie dat he ein ende nam: (S. II, 1-5)

. . . . . vernomen,  
 "van onsen sonden *es't komen*,  
 dat wir godes vergâten  
 ende dâ heime sâten  
 dat quam van ovelen dingen. (S. II, 2282-5)

In the first example *hât gegeven* should be in the same tense as *kerde, erde, gaf*; in the second, *es komen* the same as *nam*; in the third, *es komen* the same as *quam*. The use of the perfect may in every case be explained by the poet's need of a rime. Perhaps in the last example quoted it might be better to say that *quam* should be perfect instead of that *es komen* should be preterit. Cf. Preterit for Perfect (d).

A similar passage from Gottfried is the following:

ich fuor von lande über mer  
 mit einem heilichen her  
 und kom vil frideliche  
 her in disiu riche,  
 als ich è mâles *hân getân*,  
 ich wande, ez sus niht solte ergân. (T. 6399-6404)

No instances were noted in Wolfram.

C. PRETERIT for PERFECT: As already stated, the preterit is often found where NHG requires the perfect. 120 instances of this were noted in Veldeke, 60 in Gottfried, 36 in Wolfram. For

convenience in discussion these are divided into five groups, as follows:

(a) A fairly large number of instances are explained by the fact that the perfect (or pluperfect, see below) of modal auxiliaries did not occur in MHG, because these verbs had not yet developed a past participle. An example:

ich enweit wen si hän erslagen,  
also si mich *wolden* slân, (E. 1074-5)

(b) With *ie* and *nie* the perfect is practically never used. All three poets use the preterit with these adverbs, even when the verb is clearly perfect in meaning. (For the reason see Summary, 5, b.) More than a hundred such cases of preterit for perfect were noted, 30 of which have the prefix *ge-*. Of course, the preterit is very frequently used correctly with *ie* and *nie*. A few examples of preterit for perfect:

alre der manne,  
der ich met ougen *ie gesach*,  
so ich mich verdenken mach,  
her enwas nehein sô wale gedân. (E. 1536-9)

úwer skilt es skoene ende goet,  
den hât ir noch sô wale behoet,  
dat he *nie* wont *wart*,  
end úwer helm es sô starc,  
dat he sich *nie* gebouch: (E. 8649-53)

Two instances of preterit for perfect not in clauses with *ie* or *nie*, but with a similar meaning are the following:

ich *enfriesc* in den lande  
neheine hôtít sô grôt,  
der alsô menich genöt. (E. 13218-20)

wan ich *gesach* in manegen tagen  
*nieman* . . . . (T. 3964-5)

There are two perfects with *ie* in Gottfried.

Morôlt, als uns diu wârheit  
*ie hât gesaget* und hiute seit (T. 6881-2)

*ie* noch enhât nieman *vernomen* (T. 8902)

The combination of present and perfect in 6882 is especially surprising in view of Veldeke's usage. The latter regularly writes *sô ich bin ende was*, etc., even when *ie* is not present. But cf.

T. 4722: *ir ist und ist genouc gewesen*. It should be noted that in both perfects with *ie* the present idea is very prominent, and the adverb has an indefinite meaning, "at any time." One instance may be partly due to rime. At any rate, these two perfects among so many preterits for perfect can be of no great significance.

There seems to be a tendency for other temporal adverbs, as *sit*, *ê*, etc., to exert an influence similar to that of *ie* and *nie*. But as there are so few examples of these with preterit for perfect, and as they occur with both perfect and pluperfect, no definite conclusion can be drawn in regard to them.

(c) The need of a rime sometimes influenced the poet to choose the preterit instead of the perfect. Of the 15 examples two have *ge-*.

ich wele es danken den goden,  
die hen hêre *sanden*,  
he sal in desen lande . . . . . (E. 554-6)

*e-en* was for Veldeke a perfect rime. With the above compare:  
nu hen got hêre *hât gesant*, (E. 545)

Many cases where rime may have been of some influence in the choice of tense, but does not seem to have been the deciding factor, have been reserved for (d) below. Preterit for perfect because of rime is much more frequent in Veldeke than in the South German poets. In all three poets, every instance is in a dependent clause.

(d) It must not be forgotten that even the so-called absolute perfect is, after all, a relative tense, that is, it deals with past events in their relation to the present. Hence, if the poet becomes so intent on the act in itself that he disregards its relation to the present, the preterit becomes for him the correct tense. This explains a number of cases of apparent confusion between these two tenses. Examples are:

wand ir úch selve *hât erslagen*  
dorch eines mannes minne.  
dat *quam* von onsinne. (E. 2470-2)

sie *hât gesetzet* mir min leben:  
sie *hiez* mich milteliche geben, (P. XV, 1035-6)

Of 15 instances all but two are in independent clauses.

To these should be added a considerable number of cases which might have been classed under (c) as due to rime. They have been reserved for this section because it seemed that rime was a less

important factor in determining the use of the preterit than was the poet's disregard of the relation to the context.

leider des enbin ich niet.  
mîn dombez herte mich *verriet*. (L. 66, 24-5)

Artûs der Britanois  
lit hie bî mit werder diet,  
von den ich mich hiute *schiet*. (P. XV, 600-2)

Of 24 examples all but one are in dependent clauses.

In parenthetical remarks of the poet to the listener, we sometimes find the perfect, sometimes the preterit. An examination of these passages throws an important light on the distinction in meaning between these two tenses. A large number occur. For convenience in discussion they are arranged in five groups.

1.

als ich et an den boeken *las* (E. 5015)  
alsô als ich gescreven *sach* (S. I, 1560)  
op der Provencal die wârheit *las* (P. XVI, 550)  
(28 examples)

2.

als man û *segede* bevoren (E. 8411)  
reht als ich iu ê *seite* (T. 3468)  
(6 examples)

3.

die dat boech *hân* *gelesen* (E. 2701)  
ir *hât* wale *vernomen* (E.1 and often)  
und also ir selbe *habet* *vernomen* (T. 5281)  
ir *habet* wol *gehæret* ê (P. XV, 1236)  
(24 examples)

4.

von dem ich her *gesaget* *hân* (T. 1958)  
daz *hân* ich iu *gesaget* ê (P. XVI, 98)  
(7 examples)

5.

ich *hân* *hen* selen *hören* *klagen* (E. 6678)  
also ich *hân* *vernomen* (T. 3835)  
(6 examples)

Groups 1 and 3 are the largest and most important. A glance at them reveals the general difference between the preterit and the perfect in such clauses. In every case the verb is one of hearing,

reading, or otherwise acquiring information. When the information referred to is acquired by the poet alone (group 1), the preterit is used; when by his hearers or both himself and his hearers (group 3), the perfect. The reason for this difference is that in the latter case, the idea of the effect upon the present is more prominent in the mind of the poet. “*Ihr habt das gehört*” is practically the equivalent of “*ihr wisst das*.” “*Ich las das*,” or even “*ich habe das gelesen*” contains more distinctly the idea of a past action. The present idea is also prominent in group 4, which contains perfects only, and is closely allied to group 3. According to this reasoning we should expect to find the perfect in group 2 as well. But it should be noticed that each example under 2 contains a temporal adverb, which may tend to draw the emphasis away from the present.

Group 5 offers more difficulty. E. 6678 would probably be a preterit but for the adverb *selden*, which makes it refer to more than one action. Two other perfects in this group (not quoted) are due to rime. This leaves to be explained 3 cases of *ich hân vernomen* found in Gottfried. Neither *ich hörte* nor *ich vernam* is found in Tristan. The only expression to which *ich hân vernomen* may be compared is *ich las*, which occurs frequently. This difference in tense is probably to be explained by the difference in the force of the two verbs. *Lesen* is a more active verb than *vernomen*. *Ich hân vernomen* probably meant to the poet "I have in mind, I remember to have heard," and did not call to mind a definite past act, as did "ich las." It should perhaps be mentioned that *ich hân gelesen* occurs frequently and correctly in speeches put into the mouth of one of the characters of the story. This case, however, is not parallel to the parenthetical expressions here considered.

(e) Only two cases of preterit for perfect remain to be considered. These are isolated cases for which no explanation is attempted.

üwer moeder Venüs  
end üwer broeder Cupidō,  
die *mädchen* mich vel unfrō,  
die mir dat herte hán benomen. (E. 2368-71)

Son, et es dir goet vernomen,  
dorch wat ich her op bin komen  
die gode hân mich hêre gesant,  
ich *quam* dir hêre te trôste (E. 2551-6)

Perhaps both of these might have been included under (d) above. The relation to the context is certainly disregarded, but the change of tense seems rather abrupt in both cases.

## 2. *Passive*

A. **PERFECT:** The perfect passive occurs 48 times in Veldeke, 50 in Gottfried, and 31 in Wolfram. This does not include a considerably larger number of cases in which the past participle may be considered as having purely adjectival force. Only those cases in which the verbal force of the participle is clear have been included.

In meaning the perfect passive does not differ from the active. A few examples are:

dat segget im wârlike,  
wand et *es* mir *geboden*  
end *gewissaget* van den goden. (E. 3958-60)

Tristan, dir *ist* der wunsch *gegeben*  
aller der fuoge . . . . (T. 3710-2)

Like the active, the perfect passive sometimes has future perfect force:

nein leider unser aller leben,  
daz wir ze frôuden solten haben,  
daz *ist* erstorben unde *begraben*  
swann' ir von hinnen kôret; (T. 5828-31)

This passage contains both an active and a passive perfect. Such cases as this made easy the formation of the active perfect once the passive had been formed.

B. **PERFECT** for PRETERIT does not occur.

C. **PRETERIT** for **PERFECT:** Only 5 instances were noted, 3 in Veldeke, and 2 in Gottfried. All are with *ie* or *nie*.

ir sit geboren von draken,  
ir *enwurt* von lûden *nie geboren*. (E. 2218-9)  
  
i'ne *wart* alsus *besorget nie*. (T. 2359)

## II. PLUPERFECT, AND PRETERIT FOR PLUPERFECT

### 1. *Active*

A. **PLUPERFECT:** Like the perfect, the pluperfect in MHG had practically the same function as today; but it is not always used when modern usage calls for it. The problem, then, in a

study of the pluperfect is exactly the same as in the case of the perfect.

The NHG pluperfect denotes "eine solche vergangene Handlung, die vollendet war, bevor eine andere vergangene Handlung eintrat" (Blatz). This applies just as well to MHG.

The pluperfect active occurs in Veldeke 535 times, in Gottfried 175, in Wolfram 58. This number includes numerous subjunctives. Examples with usual meaning are:

Doe et alsô quam,  
dat Manalaus den sege nam,  
.  
doe *hade* der hêre Énreas  
van den goden *vernomen*,  
dat he dannen solde komen, (E. 49-56)

sie neig in unde sagete in danc;  
die ir nach grôzer schulde  
geholfen heten hulde. (P. XV, 1384-6)

Occasionally the action (preterit) previous to the completion of the action expressed by the pluperfect is omitted, thus giving the impression that events took place in such rapid succession that the poet could not take the time to relate them all. This adds vividness to the narration, and is often done today.

und hiez in dà beraten  
mit rilicher waete.  
Tristan in schiere *haete*  
schöne *gebadet* und wol *gekleit*. (T. 4062-5)

(b) Attention has already been called to the use of the perfect to express an action begun in the past but continuing into the present. Similarly, for an action begun before another past action, but continuing at the time of the latter, we occasionally find the pluperfect.

want dat buscopdoeme erre  
sô lange *hadde gewesen* (S. II, 458-9)

Nu daz der herre Riwalin  
wol driu jär ritter was gewesen (T. 333-5)

Elsewhere Gottfried uses the preterit.

die stete unde diu kastel,  
diu von Kaneies jären  
in siner pflege wären (T. 5206-8)

B. PLUPERFECT for PRETERIT: Instances of this are rare, only 12 being noted. As in the case of perfect for preterit all may be explained by rime. All are in independent clauses.

doe si des worden geware,  
dat si ons met neheinen dingen  
niwet mochten gewinnen  
ende decke skaden haden genomen,  
doe *wâren* si des enein *komen*,  
dat si ons begeven wolden (E. 952-7)

Ruál was dâ willekommen.  
nu *haete* auch in der künec *genomen*  
an sine hant und leite in hin. (T. 4331-3)

C. PRETERIT for PLUPERFECT: In Veldeke there are 170 instances, in Gottfried 80, in Wolfram 30, making a total of 280 against about 770 pluperfects. There are about 220 preterits for perfect against 625 perfects. The ratio 280:770 is very nearly the same as the ratio 220:625; that is, the preterit is used just about as frequently for the perfect as for the pluperfect. (Paul § 278, 3, 4, seems to imply that preterit for pluperfect is more common.)

The cases of preterit for pluperfect may be grouped in much the same way as those of preterit for perfect.

(a) As already indicated, the pluperfect of modals did not exist, because the latter had no past participles. This explains about a dozen preterits for pluperfect. An example:

et *endorchte* niet sô wesen,  
of wir solden sîn genesen. (E. 1199-1200)

(b) The presence of *ie* or *nie* explains 37 instances of preterit for pluperfect. 7 of them have *ge-*.

und sach der süezen allez sider  
baltlicher unde süezer wider,  
dan er *ie* dâ vor *getaete* (T. 1095-7)

die fluzzen ime ze munde,  
daz si's ê *nie vernâmen*, (T. 2283-4)

But there are two instances of *nie* and one of *ie* with the pluperfect.

er *enhade* met sinen live  
*nie* met solikes *gesien* (E. 2698-9)

he was in storm noch in striit  
*nie* da bevoren *komen* ê (E. 7580-1)

Hier under *haete ie* Tristan  
den tougenlichen smerzen  
*verborgen* in dem herzen. (T. 5292-4)

In these the pluperfect idea seems to have been so prominent that the poet used that tense in spite of the adverbs *ie* and *nie*. At any rate, these are but 3 cases against 37 with preterit for pluperfect, not counting the numerous cases where we feel the preterit to be correct.

As in the case of preterit for perfect, other temporal adverbs seem to exert some influence.

end dat toe dien busdoeme  
degein buscop enwart verkoren,  
dat Sente Servās *hadde dā tevoren* (S. II, 410-2)  
daz lant, daz *ē* Britanje *hiez*, (T. 432)

But we often find the pluperfect with *ē*, sometimes with *da* *bevoren*, etc. (See E. 7580-1) quoted above, also:

er *haetc* ouch *ē* alsam *getān*. (T. 4048)

Instances of *sit*, *ē*, *te voren*, etc., with preterit for pluperfect are not sufficiently numerous to warrant any conclusion as to their effect on tense. We may only note the tendency to use the preterit with them.

The foregoing study would seem to throw some light on the historical development of the use of the compound tenses with temporal adverbs. Originally, of course, the preterit was used with them all. It was gradually replaced, when the meaning called for it, by the perfect and pluperfect. *Ie* and *nie* offered the strongest resistance to the new tenses. By the time of classical MHG the compound tenses MIGHT be used with other temporal adverbs, and the tendency to use them with *ie* and *nie* was just beginning to make itself felt.

(c) A considerable number of preterits for pluperfect may be explained by the poet's need of a rime.

niet enwolde er dannen kommen,  
*ē* danne er Troie *gewan*.  
menich wif ende man. . . . (E. 8-10)

With this compare

er enwolde iedoch dar näre kommen,  
*ē* danne er *hadde vernomen*,  
wat heres dā wäre. (E. 6077-9)  
. . . . . gewarp.  
dō Blanchefür, ir vrouwe erstarp  
und Riwalin begraben was. (T. 1815-7)

Of 68 instances (9 with *ge-*) not one is in an independent clause.

Cases of preterit for pluperfect after *doe*, *als*, etc., are not included in this group, but are reserved for special discussion under (e).

(d) Like the perfect, the pluperfect is a relative tense. In the former, the relation is to the present; in the latter, to another past action. If the poet becomes so intent on the past action for its own sake that he momentarily disregards its relation to the rest of the narrative, he naturally uses the preterit. Examples are:

in froun Júnônen êre  
stont ein monster dâ,  
heren hûs genoech nâ,  
dat *macde* vrouwe Dîdô. (E. 410-3)

want sî die ontocht  
mede beskônen wolde  
omb die grôten skulde,  
die sî *begienc* in den walt, (E. 1912-5)

er gap ouch vil hôhen pris  
siner gotinne Júnô,  
daz sie daz weter *fuogte* sô. (P. XV, 484-6)

There are 13 instances in independent clauses, 26 in dependent. Here are found all the preterits for pluperfect in independent clauses, except the modals and the few under (g) below.

As in the case of preterit for perfect, we must here add a number of cases in which rime may also have exerted some influence. All these (22) are in dependent clauses.

*doe berouwede hem die scolde,*  
*dat sî Sent Servâs *verstieten** (S. I, 2462-3)

*he wolde en gerne reken*  
*an Tûrnô, de hen *sloech*.* (E. 7760-2)

(e) In the Eneide, no less than 40 instances of preterit for pluperfect, that is, nearly 30% of the total, are found in dependent temporal clauses after *doe*. Perhaps most of these might be attributed to rime, and a number of them have the prefix *ge-*, but nevertheless, the large number of such instances suggest that an investigation of the use of tenses in temporal clauses might be profitable.

The Eneide contains over 300 dependent clauses introduced by *doe*. About 250 of these have a preterit verb. Examples

*dâ was vele mekel nôt,*  
*doe man die borch *sach* vallen* (E. 12-3)

*doe* der wirt dat *vernām*  
 . . . . .  
*doe* wart dā vele geklāget. (E. 4658-60)

About 55 have a pluperfect verb.

*doe* man den helet hēren  
 vor sinen vader *hadde bracht*,  
*doe* viel der koninc in onmacht (E. 8172-4)

Of the 250 preterits, 40 should be pluperfect. A strict interpretation of the rule that the pluperfect must be used to denote "an action completed before another past action began," would undoubtedly greatly increase this number. For example compare the following:

*doe* si die māre  
 rehte *vernāmen*,  
 met frage si dō quamen (E. 446-8)

si worden des te rāde  
 dat sie vor si wolden gān.  
*doe* si't *hadden gedān*  
*doe* entfienc si goedlike (E. 452-5)

Of the 55 pluperfects all but 8 are in rime position.

In the other works examined the same usage prevails. Servatius has nearly 20 instances of preterit for pluperfect after *doe*, or *als*, which appears here, but not in the Eneide, with the same meaning. The pluperfect occurs but 15 times. In Tristan the usual conjunction is *nu* or *nu daz*, with no apparent difference in meaning. The pluperfect is found but 9 times, all in rime position. The preterit with clearly pluperfect meaning occurs 21 times, only 8 being in rime position. 4 preterits for pluperfect and only one pluperfect were noted in Wolfram.

This examination shows clearly that while the pluperfect had begun to be used in temporal clauses, its development in this construction was far from completed. The preterit was still preferred, even when the pluperfect meaning was quite prominent. When the latter tense was used, it was often for the sake of rime.

(f) The use of preterit for pluperfect in a number of passages can be explained only by the presence of the prefix *ge-*. Many of the cases grouped under (b) to (e) were undoubtedly influenced by this prefix, a fuller discussion of which will be found later. A single example will here suffice.

in den selven tiden,  
 sint dat die koninginne  
*geredede* omb die minne (E. 10006-8)

(g) A single passage remains to be considered:

he was te Laurente komen  
 ende hadde gesant  
 nā den vorsten in dat lant  
 end *segede* en die māre  
 end *nam* die borgāre,  
 die hem mochten fromen?  
 die vorsten hadde er ouch genomen,  
 end menegen helet lussam,  
 met den he vor den koninc quam. (E. 4844-52)

Every verb in this passage, except *quam* and possibly *mochten*, should be pluperfect, as the action expressed by all the others was completed before the beginning of the action expressed by *quam*. But nowhere in Veldeke are there as many pluperfects in succession as this would require. Perhaps he changed the terises for the sake of variety in style, feeling that the priority of the action was sufficiently emphasized by the three pluperfects which he used. For a similar passage see E. 1047-58 discussed under preterit for pluperfect passive.

## 2. Passive

A. PLUPERFECT: Excluding all cases in which the participle may be considered as having purely adjectival force, the pluperfect passive occurs 198 times in Veldeke, 55 in Gottfried, and 27 in Wolfram. Hence, except in Wolfram, it is much more frequent than the perfect passive. A good example is:

iserkolzen heten sie dennoch an  
 'z ander harnasch *was* von in *getān*. (P. XVI, 469-70)

The subjunctive is found, but not frequently.

B. PLUPERFECT for PRETERIT does not occur.

C. PRETERIT for PLUPERFECT: Cases of this are very rare in comparison with the active.

(a) The only passives with *ie* and *nie* are preterits, but there are only 4 cases of preterit for pluperfect with them.

man bōt dā Riwalin  
 den antphanc und die ère,  
 daz ez ime dā vor *nie* māre  
 ze deheinen ziten anderswā  
 sō werde *erboiten* wart sō dā. (T. 486-90)

## (b) Rime accounts for two instances.

dar was wale menich man  
 di niet enweste nochtan,  
 wat bedüden solde die vart,  
 toe dat't hen *geseit wart*, (S. I, 1125-8)

(c) As in the active there are a few (5) cases of preterit for pluperfect caused by the poet's disregarding the relation of certain actions to the ones immediately preceding in the narrative.

of't sine genâde wäre,  
 dat he beskermde dat lant,  
 von danne he *wart dare gesant* (S. I, 1554-6)

(d) The passive is used in dependent temporal clauses in much the same way as the active. But the pluperfect is proportionally more frequent, and both preterit and pluperfect seem to be used with greater accuracy. For example, in the Eneide there are 16 pluperfect passives after *doe* and only 8 preterits. 4 of the latter should be pluperfects, but in all 4 cases the use of the preterit may be explained by the rime *wart-vart*.

do et allet *gedân wart*,  
 doe hoeven si sich an die vart. (E. 977-8)

The substitution of *wart* for *was* in such cases was very easy. In all other cases the preterit is accurately used.

In Servatius the preterit is used for pluperfect after *doe* 5 times. That this was due to rime, as in the Eneide, is clearly shown by the following passage:

Doe alsus die romske vart  
 op Sent Servâs *geleit wart*,  
 ende dar toe *was verkoren* (S. I, 1183-5)

The 2 instances in Gottfried may also be due to rime. The one from Wolfram cannot be due to rime, but he has no pluperfects with *doe*.

*dô der bendiz wart getân*,  
 Parzivaln enpfangen sine man. (P. XVI, 477-8)

(e) There is one preterit for pluperfect passive in a passage similar to the one already discussed:

dat dede Ulices—  
 he *was meister des*—  
 dat ich dar toe *wart erkoren*.  
 des hede ich nâ den lif *verloren*.  
 ich *was dar toe bereidet*  
 mich *hadde dare geleidet*

Ulices und die sine.  
 met ole end met wine  
*wart* mir't houvet *gewasken*.  
 si haden mir mele ende aske  
 dar op geleget beide. (E. 1047-58)

*Wart gewasken* should be in the same tense as the pluperfects which precede and follow it. The way the passage stands, Veldeke implies that the *mele ende aske* were applied before the *ole end win*, which is not only illogical, but contradicts his French source as well. Compare the corresponding lines of the "Roman d'Eneas" (*Bibliotheca Normannica*, Vol. 4, Halle, 1891):

desor le chief me mistrent sel,  
 vin et oile, farine et cendre. (1040-1)

The passage under discussion seems to be another indication that Veldeke could not sustain a narrative in the pluperfect even though the meaning clearly called for it. Nowhere does he have more than three or four consecutive pluperfects.

### III. THE PREFIX GE- WITH PTERIT

In attempting to explain the presence of preterits where we should expect perfects and pluperfects, we have so far, except in a very few instances, paid no attention to the possible influence of the prefix *ge-*. Its presence has been noted, however, in every case except in verbs which regularly have the prefix in all forms, e. g., *gewinnen*, and in those to which the prefix gives a different meaning, e. g., *bieten*, *gebieten*. Aside from these all preterits with *ge-* will now be briefly examined with a view to determining as closely as possible the force of the prefix.

(1) *Ge-* in General Germanic had the function of making the verb express a momentary ("momentan") action. (Paul, § 305.) This use is still fairly frequent in MHG. Examples are:

dō *gelach* (legte sich) vrouwe Dīdō, (E. 1415)  
 nach *klagelichen sachen*  
*gesaz* er riuwechlichen nider (T. 1436-7)

*Gesach* is especially frequent. It means "caught sight of, looked and saw, witnessed," while *sach* simply means "saw, continued to see."

(he)  
 . . . . . *gesach* in beiden siden,  
 megede ende vrouwen,  
 . . . . . die hem gerne *sägen*. (E. 718-23)

But this distinction is not always carefully made.

*Gesach* in Wolfram is usually generalizing. (Cf. 2)

Occasionally this perfective function of *ge-* explains a preterit for perfect.

wan also ich dir geseggen mach,  
wand ich et selve *gesach*  
end ich däre kommen bin. (E. 3461-3)

(2) Another function of *ge-*, which developed later, is that of generalization. (Paul, § 306.) In MHG it is so used with *ie*, *nie*, *swālike*, etc., more frequently in dependent clauses than in independent. An example:

er treit sô waehen schin,  
dem ich gelichez nie gesach. (P. XV, 728-9)

Paul (§ 306) considers this function more active in MHG than the original perfective function. This is true of all the works examined except the *Eneide*.

(3) *Ge-* as a strengthening prefix is especially frequent in Gottfried, and is occasionally found in the other poets. An example:

als ich von in beiden  
waerliche mac bescheiden,  
wie er gefuor und si gewarp (T. 1813-5)

Perhaps the most surprising example of this is the single case of *ge-* with *komen*, a verb which is already perfective without the prefix.

er sis worden te râde,  
dat si tesamen gequâmen,  
end her wâpen genâmen (S. II, 1390-2)

(4) The most important function of *ge-* for our purposes, almost the only one, in fact, which directly concerns the question of tense, is its use in dependent, generally temporal clauses. From its perfective function, *ge-* in such constructions developed a temporal force, and sometimes gave the verb the force of a pluperfect.

### Examples:

da si eine weile so gelach (gelegen hatte) (E. 1350)

nu si dō heim kämen  
ein ander z'ē *genämen*  
• • • • •  
dō bevalch er mir . . . (T. 4189-93)

*Kämen* (T. 4189) is also preterit for pluperfect. It never takes *ge-* except in the single example from Servatius just quoted.

Quite a sharp controversy has arisen concerning the following passage of this kind from *Parzival*.

Nu wasez auch zit daz man da *gaz*.  
*Parzival* bi sinem brudersáz:  
 den bat er gesellekeit.  
*Feirefiz* was im al bereit  
 gein Munsalvaesch' ze riten. (P. XV, 1523-7)

Heinzel (*Über Wolfram von Eschenbachs Parzival*. Wien, 1893. Sitzungsbericht der k. Academie der Wissenschaften in Wien, phil.- his. Cl. bd. CXXX.) reads *gaz* as "essen sollte." Martin (A. D. A. XX, 257) reads "gegessen hatte." Wunderlich (*Der Deutsche Satzbau*, 2te Ausgabe, Stuttgart 1901. Bd. I, 257) reads both *gaz* and *bat* as pluperfects. But to read *bat* as pluperfects seems not only unnecessary but inconsistent with the usage of MHG as outlined above under preterit for pluperfect. By a slight change in punctuation, the passage may easily and naturally be read: "The meal was over and Parzival was sitting by his brother; he asked him for comradeship, and Feirifiz was ready to ride with him to Munsalvaesche." There can be little question that *gaz* was meant as pluperfect. The following passage, also from *Parzival*, makes this clear:

des was zit, dô man *gaz*,  
*Gawan* der wirt niht langer *saz*: (P. XV, 1226-7)

But compare these with the following passage from *Veldeke*:

Dô si alle frô sâten  
 ende dronken ende *gâten*  
 vel wale nâ hêren willen,  
 dô enwas et dâ niet stille. (E. 13153-6)

It seems forced to read this "Indem sie alle froh sassen und tranken und *gegessen hatten*," but unless we are willing to accept this reading, *gâten* must be imperfective. It might be well to add that one manuscript has *âzen* instead of *gâten*.

(5) In conclusion, we see that *ge-* sometimes gave the preterit a pluperfect, and, very rarely, a perfect meaning, but much more frequently it has an entirely different force. Hence any such inclusive statement to the effect that "the preterit acquires a pluperfect meaning when the prefix *ge-* is added to it," (Cf. Wright *MHG Primer*, p. 38), is not justified. The example given by Wright is especially unfortunate. "Dô ich in *gesach*," even tho

a temporal clause, is very apt to mean "when I caught sight of him," and not "when I had seen him," as Wright gives it.

#### IV. INFLUENCE OF VELDEKE'S SOURCE ON TENSE

All the MHG poets considered in this study drew to a great extent on French sources, sometimes translating almost line for line. This being the case, we must face the question of possible French influence on their use of the compound tenses. As the *Eneide* bears a closer resemblance to its source than any of the other works examined, it was carefully compared with the French original, the "Roman d'Eneas," attributed to Benoît de Sainte-More, in order to determine whether it exerted any influence on Veldeke's use of the perfect and pluperfect.

In examining the tenses of the French work we are everywhere met by a most surprising confusion. Possibly a majority of the verb forms in the narrative are preterits (from the Latin perfect). But often, for no reason whatever, the poet changes to the perfect (past indefinite). Occasionally we even find the imperfect with apparently the same meaning. And to add to this confusion, a considerable part of the story is told in the historical present. A single example will suffice.

Lausus le *fiert* en l'escu halt,  
 . . . . .  
 onkes la lance n'i *entra*  
 . . . . .  
 et Eneas *a lui feru* (5887-91)

This confusion is found in all Old French. Brunot says (*Précis de Grammaire Historique de la langue française*, 3rd ed., Paris 1894, p. 464): ". . . tous les temps du passé ont été longtemps confondus dans leur emploi. On les avait créés ou conservés, dit Chabaneau, avec le sentiment confus de l'utilité distincte de chacun d'eux, on ne savait assigner d'emploi distinct à aucun d'eux. Cela ne devait se faire que graduellement."

Veldeke, on the other hand, uses only the preterit as the narrative tense. When he changes to the perfect, he nearly always has a good reason for it, as we have seen. Of the historical present there is not the slightest trace. Hence it is clear that if there is any French influence it must be confined to the few passages which he translates exactly. A very careful comparison of the two

poems was made, the results of which were so meager that it is useless to reproduce them here. There is but a single passage in which Veldeke shows more than the most accidental agreement in tense with his source. This passage we now quote.

Qu'avez trove?—Nos bien.—Et quei?  
 —Cartage.—Parlastes al rei?  
 —Nenil.—Por quei? . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
*Parlastes* vos o li?  
 . . . . .  
 Et que *dist* donc? . . . . . (645-651)

he sprac: 'wat *hät* ir *fonden*?'  
 "allet goet," 'ende wat?'  
 "Kartago." 'wat es dat?'  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 'språket ir si?' "ja wir däden."  
 . . . . .  
 'wat *entböt* si ons?' . . . . . (E. 608-19)

Both versions begin with a perfect, and all the other verbs are preterits. This change in the French is nothing unusual, but in Veldeke it can be explained only by reference to his source. The rapidly moving dialogue seems to have pleased the German poet so much that he translated it, consciously or unconsciously, almost word for word.

Our conclusion is that French influence in the use of tenses on Veldeke is a negligible quantity. In the case of Gottfried or Wolfram such influence is even less likely.

## V. SUMMARY

The foregoing examination of the use of the compound tenses in MHG leads us to conclusions which may be summarized as follows:

- (1) There is practically no difference between North and South German in the use of the perfect and pluperfect.
- (2) Veldeke, Gottfried, and Wolfram were all much more accurate in their use of the perfect tenses, as they understood their function, than are many of our modern poets. (Cf. the discussion of Schiller's use of perfect and preterit in Wunderlich I, p. 225 f.)

(3) The perfect and pluperfect were more highly developed in the passive than in the active. This is not surprising, as the perfect passive was an earlier development than the perfect active. Proofs are:

(a) In proportion to the number of preterits, passive perfects and pluperfects are much more numerous than active. The following table makes this clear:

<i>Passive</i>					
	No. of Prets.	No. of Perfs.	No. of Plups.	Ratio of Perf. to Pret.	Ratio of Plup. to Pret.
Veldeke	140	48	198	1:3	10:7
Gottfried	99	50	55	1:2	1:2
Wolfram	62	31	27	1:2	3:7
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>		
Total	301	129	280	5:12	14:15
<i>Active</i>					
Veldeke	2500 (estimated)	390	535	1:6	1:5
Gottfried	1250 "	260	175	1:5	1:7
Wolfram	300 "	73	58	1:5	1:5
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>		
Total	4050	" 723	768	1:5	1:5

Every ratio indicates the greater frequency of the passive forms. And the discrepancy between active and passive is probably greater than appears from the table, for both the active preterits and the passive perfects and pluperfects are really more numerous than the foregoing figures show. It was estimated that there was one active preterit per 8 lines, which is undoubtedly low, the preterit being the narrative tense. The number of passive perfects and pluperfects is low, because only compounds in which the participle had clearly verbal force were counted.

(b) There are practically no cases of preterit for perfect in the passive, and very few of preterit for pluperfect as compared with the active.

(c) In temporal clauses after *doe*, etc., the tenses are used with greater accuracy in the passive.

(4) The perfect and pluperfect were more highly developed in independent than in dependent clauses, which probably indicated an earlier development in the former. Proofs are:

(a) The only cases of confusion in independent clauses between preterit and perfect, or preterit and pluperfect, aside from modals and clauses with *ie* and *nie*, are the comparatively few cases where

the poet momentarily neglects the relation of one action to the rest of his narrative.

(b) The use of preterit for perfect or pluperfect to supply a needed rime is confined entirely to dependent clauses.

(c) In temporal clauses with *doe*, etc., the preterit was still preferred to the pluperfect, especially in the active.

(d) Most of the instances of pluperfect for preterit occur in independent clauses.

(5) In general, the distinction between perfect and preterit was the same as it is today. The same may be said of pluperfect and preterit. The perfect denoted either an action completed in the present of the speaker, or an action the results of which still affect that present. The pluperfect denoted an action completed before another past action (preterit) began. But in order to call for the perfect or pluperfect, THE RELATION OF THE PAST ACTION TO THE PRESENT, OR TO ANOTHER PAST ACTION, HAD TO BE MORE DISTINCTLY FELT THAN TODAY. Proofs are:

(a) The relative character of the verbal action is naturally felt more strongly in independent clauses than in dependent. This accounts for the higher development of the perfect and pluperfect in the former.

(b) The adverbs *ie* and *nie* draw the attention of the speaker to the time of the action itself, and away from its relation to other actions. The feeling for the relativity of the verbal action being thus dulled, the preterit is used with these adverbs.

(c) When the relative force of the verb was not distinctly felt, the MHG poets felt free to disregard it and use the preterit. This fact is especially well illustrated by the usage in the case of such expressions as *als ich laz*, *als ir hât vernomen*, a full discussion of which has been given.

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